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# Clery Act Reporting: Domestic Violence Data from University Police Department in 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act), passed in 1990, requires universities to report on-campus crime and how to improve safety on and around campus. To comply with the second half of the Clery Act, The University of South Alabama Police Department, headed by newly hired chief Darren Baxley, provided information regarding the reporting and dispositions of deidentified domestic violence crimes reported to their dispatch throughout the calendar year of 2023. This information has become a highlight of Chief Baxley's targeted approach to understanding the agency he inherited.

Due to the elevated number of cases in a recent year of Clery Act reporting, Chief Baxley reached out to Dr. Rockwell within the Political Science and Criminal Justice department at the University of South Alabama to learn more from the reports provided. Insights on these data relate to current literature on the crimes reported, and evidence-based suggestions to improving reporting tactics by officers and the department on these specific crime types. We would like to recognize and appreciate the efforts put forth by both Chief Baxley and the University Police Department (UPD) to better understand on-campus dating violence within our university.

## BACKGROUND

Dating/domestic violence (or intimate partner violence) can include experiencing physical, psychological/emotional, or sexual abuse while in a "partnered relationship" (Cantor et al., 2020). In the college setting, this "partnered relationship" can include a casual or hookup relationship, a steady or serious relationship, marriage, civil union, domestic partnership, or cohabitation. College students can be at a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to the general population (Sinozich & Langton, 2014) due to the college social environment (e.g., hookup or party culture, less supervision, alcohol use, binge drinking, etc.). It is estimated approximately 9-54% of U.S. college students experience intimate partner violence (also referred to as dating or domestic violence (DV); Ameral et al., 2020; Basile et al., 2022; Cantor et al., 2020; Sabina & Straus, 2008).

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A systematic review of dating violence risk factors found a variety of individual, familial, and social factors increase one's likelihood of experiencing and/or perpetrating DV while in college (Duval et al., 2020). For example, Duval and colleagues (2020) state drinking alcohol, endorsing rape myths, engaging in risky sexual behaviors, experiencing child abuse, and witnessing interparental violence were risk factors for DV victimization and perpetration (also see Kaukinen, 2014). Overall, the experience of DV can severely impact the academic success and well-being of the student as well as have long-lasting damaging effects on the health and wellness of the student.

## **METHODS**

This technical report provides descriptive statistics on the 2023 "On-Campus" cases involving domestic violence, as classified by the university police department. Within the calendar year of 2023, 28 individual instances of domestic or dating violence resulted in 22 cases filed by the university police department, as required by Clery Act standards. These data were deidentified to protect sensitive information, while still providing basic information for the current report to provide feedback on this topic and give actionable recommendations for the university police department to adjust their procedures moving forward, should those recommendations be feasible.

As these data are secondary and some information has been redacted to protect the privacies of the individuals involved, the report is limited in its scope of coverage as well as its ability to explain variance that could be contributing to the prevalence of domestic or dating violence occurring on campus. The data were exported from an Excel file into Stata18 for cleaning and analysis. Among the data coding efforts include separating cases where multiple instances of officer/reported victim encounters occurred. As these data were originally qualitative, each variable was categorized to best represent the information within the reports. The researchers paid attention to the information within each original variable and ensured consistency throughout the coding process.

It should also be noted that while almost all instances occur on the main campus of the university, some outlying locations are worth noting. First, as the university has a growing population, there are limited dormitory buildings able to accommodate all students who require "on-campus" housing options. As such, there are surrounding apartment complexes—structured for student housing and rented out per room, not per unit—within less than a tenth of a mile of campus grounds which the university contracts out rooms for students to use as "on-campus housing." Additionally, as the university comprises a larger health system, the university police are also responsible for protecting and serving the several hospitals and health facilities within the surrounding city limits, as well as providing personnel to support the additional campus in the next county over.

It is with this in mind that while the results largely constitute traditional, college-age students with dating violence reports that occurred on campus property, there are some instances where non-students and locations not within university properties will be discussed.

## **RESULTS**

The results for this report are descriptive and exploratory, emphasizing the location of the reported cases, the time of day and school year the cases occurred, and the demographic makeup of the individuals involved in the cases. Of the 28 instances, 64.3% happened on campus in various locations, 50% were categorized as assaults, and all but one instance (98%) reported victims were female. The demographic information of the reported victims can be found in Table 1.

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**Table 1: Demographics**

	Frequency/Range	Percentage/Mode
<b>Sex of Complainant</b>		
<i>Female</i>	27	96.4
<i>Male</i>	1	3.6
<b>Age of Complainant</b>	18-44	20
<b>Age of Alleged Assailant</b>	18-47	19/21
<b>Student Affiliation</b>		
<i>Complainant</i>	24	85.7
<i>Alleged Assailant</i>	18	64.3
<b>Relationship</b>		
<i>Ex</i>	14	50.0
<i>Current</i>	11	39.3
<i>No Relationship</i>	3	10.7

The average age of reported victims was approximately 21, while the alleged perpetrators were slightly older at 22 years of age. Most of these cases occurred within the time frames of 12:01 pm to 6 pm (46.4%) and 6:01 pm to midnight (25%). The time of year for these instances was interesting in that there was an even split of reported cases between Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 (39.3% each); however, the most common month for instances to be reported was September (21.4%). The remaining results will dive further into the nuances of the information pertinent to the police chief and the researchers.

In particular to the nature of these reports, most cases involved either a currently ongoing relationship (39.3%) or a recently ended relationship (50%) between the reported victim and perpetrator. Additionally, in most of the cases that occurred during the time of 12:01 pm to 6 pm, 63.6% occurred during Fall 2023 and 55.6% occurred during the previous Spring 2023 semesters. With the majority of cases occurring on campus (64.3%), it is not surprising that a little over half of the incidents (60.7%) involved students as both the reported victim and alleged assailant. While most cases were categorized as assaults (50%), there were also a surprising number of stalking reports (28.6%). Of the reported cases, 53.6% were described as “physical” in nature, meaning the disposition of the case involved the reported victim being physically impacted in some manner. These findings are included in Table 2.

**Table 2: Time and Location**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Month</b>		
<i>January</i>	4	14.3
<i>February</i>	4	14.3
<i>March</i>	3	10.7
<i>April</i>	2	7.1
<i>May</i>	1	3.6
<i>June</i>	2	7.1
<i>August</i>	2	7.1
<i>September</i>	6	21.4
<i>October</i>	1	3.6
<i>November</i>	2	7.1
<i>December</i>	1	3.6
<b>Semester</b>		
<i>Not in Session</i>	4	14.3
<i>Spring 2023</i>	11	39.3
<i>Summer 2023</i>	2	7.1
<i>Fall 2023</i>	11	39.3
<b>Time of Day</b>		
<i>00:01 – 06:00</i>	3	11.5
<i>06:01 – 12:00</i>	2	7.7
<i>12:01 – 18:00</i>	14	53.9
<i>18:01 – 00:00</i>	7	26.9
<b>Location</b>		
<i>On-Campus</i>	18	64.3
<i>Apartment</i>	5	17.9
<i>Virtual</i>	4	14.3
<i>Off-Campus</i>	1	3.6

Finally, of the cases reported to campus police within the calendar year of 2023, 38.5% had the outcome of the complainant being referred to Title IX, 19.2% resulted in an arrest, and 26.9% ended in no action or referral taking place. Those where no action or referral was the reported outcome are separate from the 11.5% of cases where the reported victim declined services or referrals. These findings are detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Reported Information**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Disposition (other than DV)</b>		
<i>Assault</i>	14	50.0
<i>Stalking</i>	8	28.6
<i>Property Damage</i>	2	7.1
<i>Burglary</i>	1	3.6
<i>Arson</i>	1	3.6
<i>Vandalism</i>	1	3.6
<i>Rape</i>	1	3.6
<b>Reported Physicality</b>		
<i>Physical</i>	15	53.6
<i>Non-physical</i>	10	35.7
<i>Threat</i>	3	10.7
<b>Aggravated Levels</b>		
<i>Non-aggravated</i>	24	85.7
<i>Weapon</i>	3	10.7
<i>Multiple Assailants</i>	1	3.6
<b>Reported Outcome</b>		
<i>No Action/Referral</i>	7	26.9
<i>Title IX Referral</i>	10	38.5
<i>Arrest</i>	5	19.2
<i>Information Given</i>	1	3.9
<i>Victim Declined Services</i>	3	11.5

## CONCLUSION

Given the prevalence of sexual violence experienced by college students, there is a national call to incorporate annual measurements of sexual violence, such as dating violence through campus climate surveys (Duval et al., 2020). Campus climates allow college students to self-report their experience of victimization without the involvement of formal authorities, which limits reporting. Additionally, campus climate surveys can capture data while providing space to ask students about campus and community-specific information, including the university police department. This report also supports situational crime prevention. For example, officers should patrol and engage with students on campus (e.g., check-ins, non-enforcement related stops, etc.) at greater lengths between 12:01 pm to 6 pm to increase efforts and prevention efforts towards dating violence.

Another actionable change could include increasing patrol efforts during the early fall months. Specifically, during this time, students are becoming acquainted with the college social environment, such as party culture and binge drinking at Fall-related events (e.g., tailgating and football games, fraternity rushing and parties, etc.) which can increase their risk of experiencing dating violence. With the incorporation of new student housing close to campus, an important topic of discussion should be focused on improving responses to student housing apartment centers (e.g., Central House). While most incidents occurred on campus, such as parking lots and academic and residence halls, about 18% of DV incidents occurred at student housing apartment centers. With this in mind, UPD should engage in regular patrols and check-ins with residents to promote a supportive and proactive relationship with student housing apartment residents.

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Over half of the reported incidents involved student complainants/victims and alleged assailants, while this is important, it must be interpreted with care as this finding may be because of Title IX regulations used at the university as well as Clery Act guidelines (e.g., strict reporting of on-campus crime only). It is important to note the Clery data is based on cases known to the campus police and public safety departments, efforts to increase campus awareness and education on dating violence among college students should be at the forefront of administrative campaigns moving forward. Research shows when universities increase awareness and education students view the university as taking sexual violence seriously; thus, increasing student likelihood of reporting. Focused education on high-risk students, such as freshmen and sophomores, is supported by Clery data as well as in research on the “Red Zone.” The “Red Zone” refers to the fall months from August to November when students, particularly female students, are at a greater risk of experiencing sexual violence (Follingstad et al., 2023).

Another key finding from the report is the number of cases with no action or referral. Although referrals may be based on the victim’s preferences, the UPD should facilitate victim service referrals at every encounter with individuals who would benefit from this information. For example, the victim’s case may already be a part of a Title IX case or prefer not to move forward with legal charges. In this example, UPD can provide the victim with supportive material to various campus and community victim resources and services. Although the information represented here is based on limited data reported for Clery Act purposes, it is highly encouraged that UPD data and case preservation practices clarify reporting information and expand on data collected for all reported offenses to ensure greater efficiency of data and crime reporting.

These findings and suggestions all point toward increased engagement between university police officers and students both on campus and within the various housing opportunities nearby. It is understood that the department is undergoing a mass hiring process and has already improved its numbers drastically. With these personnel changes, it is the hope that collaborations between the Center for Public Policy and the university police department can facilitate further research and technical report projects. This report highlights the complexities of domestic or dating violence on college campuses as well as the notable care the new chief displays towards campus safety for students and officers alike.

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